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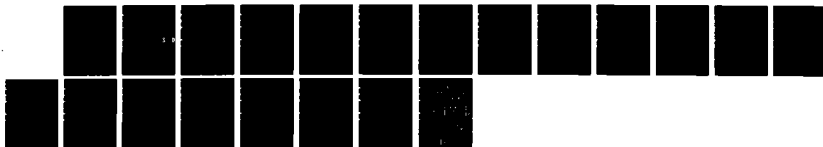
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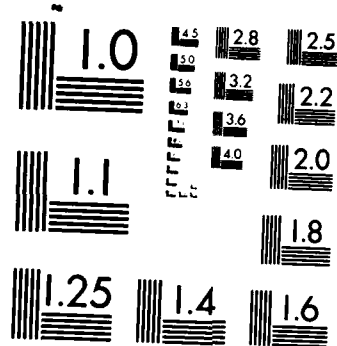
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CULTURAL RESOURCE RECONNAISSANCE OF SELECTED PORTIONS OF CORPS
OF ENGINEERS PROPERTY LOCATED NEAR LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN

prepared by

Rain Vehik and Susan C. Vehik
Department of Sociology-Anthropology
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for

Department of the Army
St. Paul District, Corps of Engineers

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AD-A164926		
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) CULTURAL RESOURCES RECONNAISSANCE OF SELECTED PORTIONS OF CORPS OF ENGINEERS PROPERTY LOCATED NEAR LA CROSSE, WINCONSIN		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED
		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
7. AUTHOR(s) Rain Vehik & Susan C. Vehik		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Department of Sociology-Anthropology University of Winconsin La Crosse		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District 1135 USPO & Custom House St. Paul, MN 55101-1479		12. REPORT DATE May 1977
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 15 p.
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) ARCHAEOLOGY LA CROSSE WISCONSIN		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) An archaeological survey was conducted in two areas south of LaCrosse, Wisconsin. The first area was two small borrow areas on Goose Island. The other region consisted to 71 acres adjacent to a transmitter building. No prehistoric and only recent historic remains were found. It is concluded that future construction activities will not adversely affect either pre-historic or historic cultural resources.		

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CULTURAL RESOURCE RECONNAISSANCE OF SELECTED PORTIONS OF CORPS
OF ENGINEERS PROPERTY LOCATED NEAR LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN

by

Rain Vehik and Susan C. Vehik
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

ABSTRACT

An archaeological survey, in accordance with EC 1105-2-37, was conducted for the St. Paul District, Corps of Engineers in two areas south of La Crosse, Wisconsin. The first area surveyed were two small borrow areas on Goose Island. The other region consisted of 71 acres adjacent to the transmitter building of radio station WKTY. A variety of techniques including interviews, shovel testing, soil cores, and pedestrian survey were utilized. No prehistoric and only recent historic remains were observed in these areas. Therefore, it is concluded that any future construction activities or disturbance of either area will not adversely affect either prehistoric or historic cultural resources.

INTRODUCTION

An archaeological survey of two parcels of land in Shelby Township owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

south of La Crosse, Wisconsin was undertaken during the latter part of April and first week of May 1977. The field work was conducted by Rain Vehik, Susan C. Vehik, Rick Linse, and Steven Kopp of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

The legal location of the first area surveyed was the W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 33, T15N, R7W on Goose Island. Two small areas, proposed as borrow areas for the Goose Island bridge replacement project, were surveyed. The other parcel of land is leased by Lee & Associates Inc. of La Crosse, Wisconsin who own radio station WKTY. The legal location of this area was the S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 27 and the N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 34, T15N, R7W.

Presently, no archaeological sites are known from the immediate area, and only about 19 recorded archaeological sites for La Crosse County are on file with the State Historical Society in Madison, Wisconsin. The majority of these are in the north half of the county, but two, one a campsite/cemetery and the other a campsite, are in the north central part of Shelby Township.

ENVIRONMENT

The research area is within the Driftless Area of the Western Upland (Martin 1965: 81-97). Klick et. al. (1971: 6) suggest that the La Crosse River divides La Crosse County into two distinct topographical regions. The area north of

the La Crosse River consists of a dissected plateau consisting of ridges and coulees. The research area, south of the La Crosse River is not as dissected nor as heavily eroded. The area, in general is thought to have been glaciated (Finley 1975: 54).

La Crosse County is generally characterized as having a humid-continental climate with great extremes of temperature, and clear days for about one-third of the year. The average annual temperature is 46.2°F, with an average summer temperature of 74°F occurring in July and an average winter temperature of 15.7°F in January. The growing season lasts about 163 days with the period of killing frosts being between 9 October and 29 April (Beatty 1960: 76-77). Annual precipitation average 30 inches, most of which occurs between May and September with June having the highest amount of precipitation (Klick et. al. 1971: 14). Snowfall, averaging 43 inches a year, occurs between October and May, but most occurs in January (Beatty 1960: 76-77).

The areas surveyed are east of the Mississippi River and are in wet alluvial bottomlands and marshes which are poorly drained (Beatty 1960). In its original state the wetland vegetation consisted of about 15% bottomland hardwoods (Ash, Elm, Soft Maple, River Birch, and Swamp White Oak) and 85% marsh. The existing cover is 70% bottomland hardwood and 30% marsh (Candeub, Flessig and Associates 1969: LU-20).

Within La Crosse County the primary game fish are Walleye and Northern Pike; Panfish; Large Mouth, Smallmouth, and White Bass; Brook and Brown Trout; and Catfish (Candeub, Flessig and Associates 1969: LU-29). Within the county deer, squirrel, fox, and raccoon are abundant; Ruffed Grouse, quail, and rabbits are common while woodcock and pheasant are scarce. Within the Mississippi River valley beaver and muskrat are common to abundant, mink and otter are scarce, ducks are abundant, and geese vary from scarce to abundant (Candeub, Flessig and Associates 1969: LU-32-LU-33).

With the exception of the Mississippi River and its associated sloughs the only other freshwater is Mormon Coulee Creek which flows in a general westerly direction to the Mississippi River draining the southern part of La Crosse County along with Coon Creek (Klick et. al. 1971: 24-25). Presently, it is being polluted by sewage, milk, and solid waste (Klick et. al. 1971: 43).

METHODS

This section will be divided into the two main areas surveyed. The first portion deals with the two borrow areas on Goose Island, and the second is concerned with surveying the land on which radio station WKTY is located, and leased by Lee and Associates Inc. of La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Basically, the same field methods were used in both areas.

These consisted of interviewing some private collectors in La Crosse County, some workmen on Goose Island, as well as conversations with Mr. Herbert Lee, owner of radio station WKTY; pedestrian survey; shovel testing; and the use of a quarter-inch soil core. No information was derived from the interviews and since both areas were covered with grass the pedestrian survey yielded very little information.

Goose Island Survey (W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 33, T15N, R7W)

Two small areas from which fill material is to be removed for the Goose Island bridge replacement project were surveyed. Pedalogically, both areas consist of Plainfield fine sand (Beatty 1960: 66).

North borrow area

The north area of the borrow operations is a section of high unforested ground approximately 252 feet north-south and 315 feet east-west. It is surrounded by what appear to be old slough channels.

The center of the area is occupied by an undeveloped road and to the south was an area for burning trash and a four foot deep trash pit which extended for about 240 feet in an east-west direction. A portion of this was still uncovered. This area had frequent rodent burrows, and another undeveloped road was north of and parallel to the trash pit. No archaeological materials were observed on the roads or by the rodent burrows.

Only one shovel test, 70 centimeters in diameter and 90 centimeters deep was placed southeast of the undeveloped center road. However, the trash pit was intensively inspected. A portion of the south wall was cleaned off to obtain a sedimentary profile. The profile was 122 centimeters deep with dark humic sand occupying the first 40 centimeters. Streaks of percolated humic material occurred to about 60 centimeters below ground surface, and the remainder of the profile consisted of a light colored sand.

North of the center road six shovel tests, 15 meters apart, were excavated along an east-west transect on the highest area of land. These units were 70 centimeters in diameter and 70 centimeters deep. Soil cores were also taken in every other test unit allowing the examination of another 100 centimeters of deposits. Additional soil cores taken to a depth of 90 centimeters below ground level were randomly placed within the area. In addition, a series of soil cores were taken every five meters along a north-south transect running through the center of the survey area.

Neither the shovel tests nor soil cores indicated the presence of subsurface prehistoric or historic materials. Basically, the sedimentary stratigraphy was the same as that described for the trash pit profile.

South Borrow Area

The south borrow area is also a high area extending

about 351 feet north-south and 245 feet east-west. It is surrounded by abandoned slough channels and bottomland hardwoods. The survey area itself was grass covered, and the highest part was covered by numerous wooden packing crates.

Shovel tests, 70 centimeters in diameter and 70 centimeters deep, were excavated north, south, east, and west of the crates. The remainder of the area was tested randomly with the soil core.

No material of archaeological or historical value was recovered. However, there appears to be more variability in the sedimentary profile than that described for the north borrow area. Along the north and east sides humic sand extends to a depth of 60 centimeters, in the southeast portion there is 90 centimeters of humic sand, and in the south there was a 35 centimeter mantle of humic sand. Pure, light colored, sand was encountered beneath the layer of humic sand.

Radio Station WKTY Survey ($S\frac{1}{2}SW\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 27 and $N\frac{1}{2}NW\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 34, T15N, R7W)

The other major area to be surveyed was 71 acres west, north, and south of the transmitter building of radio station WKTY. In actuality, slightly more than 71 acres were surveyed (Fig. 1). Most of this area was once forested,

but is now covered by herbaceous vegetation. The majority is poorly drained alluvial land, but the area on which the transmitter building is located is moderately well drained alluvium (Beatty 1960: 54).

The southeastern-most portion of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 34 west of the railroad tracks consists of an area which was artificially raised by the addition of approximately ten feet of fill when the original channel of Mormon Coulee Creek was diverted south of the transmitter building. The remainder of the research area is occupied by the abandoned meander channels of Mormon Coulee Creek. In the western part the meander channels disappear as the area becomes lower and flatter. This area is apparently more frequently subject to overflow from Mormon Slough and the Mississippi River. However, the entire region with the exception of the transmitter building is subject to inundation during high water periods such as the flood of 1965.

The artificially raised areas were not surveyed. The remainder of the area was investigated by the excavation of test units approximately 60 centimeters wide and 60 centimeters deep. These units were also tested for another 100 centimeters with a soil core. In addition, soil cores were taken between test units.

Twenty two shovel tests were excavated (Fig. 1). These were not located at any particular interval. Units 1-5

were on the highest portions of the research area. The stratigraphy of units 1-4 indicated a mixed sandy clay with interspersed lenses of sand or clay. This changed to a highly organic clay between 120 and 160 centimeters below the surface where it also became quite damp. Unit 5 revealed the same sandy clay but at approximately 70 centimeters it changed to a light colored sand which could not be penetrated with the soil core.

Units 6-11, 15, and 19-20 were on high areas of land near old meander channels. The upper 80 to 90 centimeters consisted of sandy clay with lenses of clay or sand. Occasional roots were also found. This sandy clay deposit might either continue or be replaced with a more clayey deposit. At about 140 centimeters a more highly organic clay with decaying roots was encountered. Other units either encountered sand (unit 6) or water (units 15, 19, and 20) at this point.

The remaining units were either in low lying areas near Mormon Slough or the drainage ditch for Mormon Coulee Creek. The area near Mormon Slough consisted of higher grass as well as tree stumps which had not yet been removed. Units 12, 14, 16-18, and 21-22 encountered water between 90 and 110 centimeters below the surface. Those deposits above the water table were either sandy clay or clay. Unit 13 revealed the same kind of upper deposit but at about 90 centimeters below the surface it changed to a dark organic clay which continued to at least 160 centimeters.

Only the soil core was used to test areas in the northwestern and western portions of the research area. They indicated the existence of the same upper sandy clay or clay. This material was quite damp and sticky with water being reached at about 60 centimeters below the surface.

The dark organic clay suggests the possibility of a buried, more stable land surface or surfaces. Whether these might have been in existence just before the level of the Mississippi River was raised or at a more remote time is unknown.

At any rate, no material of archaeological or historical value was encountered. Since the lower and sometimes the higher areas are subject to flooding it is unlikely that they were occupied very intensively aboriginally. It is likely that the repeated flooding and diversion of Mormon Coulee Creek would have destroyed or deeply buried much of the evidence. It should also be remembered that the dark organic clays were located only with the soil core, and as a result much less of their area was sampled.

RESULTS

No prehistoric or historic cultural materials were recovered during the archaeological survey of two borrow areas on Goose Island or land adjacent to radio station WKTY. In addition, interviews with local collectors, workmen on Goose

Island, and Mr. Herbert Lee, owner of WKTY, indicated that no archaeological materials had been previously recovered from these areas.

In surveying the borrow areas on Goose Island, especially the northern area, the only cultural materials observed were present day refuse deposited by campers utilizing the camp grounds on Goose Island. In the southern area a large quantity of wooden packing crates were noticed.

In the area of the radio station two pieces of historic glass were found over a widely scattered area, and several elements of a horse skeleton were encountered. Part of these had been buried in an old meander channel of Mormon Coulee Creek. These were the remains of a horse which had died several years ago (Herbert Lee, Personal Communication).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. An archaeological survey was conducted to determine the presence or absence of prehistoric or historic cultural materials in two borrow areas on Goose Island and 71 acres adjacent to the transmitter station of WKTY radio station. Both areas are south of La Crosse, Wisconsin. This work was undertaken upon the request of the Corps of Engineers office in St. Paul, Minnesota. The work was conducted in accordance with EC 1105-2-37 in order to evaluate the effect on cultural resources of certain activities by parties holding Department of Army leases.

2. A variety of techniques including interview, pedestrian survey, soil cores taken with an one-quarter inch manual soil sampler, and shovel testing were utilized.

3. No prehistoric materials were recovered in either area using the above mentioned techniques. Some recent historic objects (glass, can tabs, cans, plastic, wooden crates, etc.) were noticed to occur sporadically in all of the areas. Also the remains of a recently deceased horse were encountered.

4. In conclusion, on the basis of the survey results it does not appear that using the two areas of Goose Island as fill for the bridge replacement project will adversely affect either prehistoric or historic cultural resources. The same general conclusion can be drawn for the 71 acre plot leased by Lee and Associates Inc. However, it is possible that prehistoric remains may occur on buried soil horizons. As a result, it would be advisable that an archaeologist be consulted in the event that construction activities might disturb these buried soils.

5. In the "Background Report: Mississippi River Region" by Candeub, Flessig and Associates (1969) on a map indicating state, county, or municipally planned parks it is suggested that the south half of Sections 26 and 27, the east half of Section 34, and all of Section 35 are areas within which park and recreation facilities should be located. Even

though most of these locations were not in the immediate survey area it is strongly suggested that an intensive archaeological survey be conducted in these areas before any construction activities be undertaken if these park and recreational facilities are in fact to be developed.

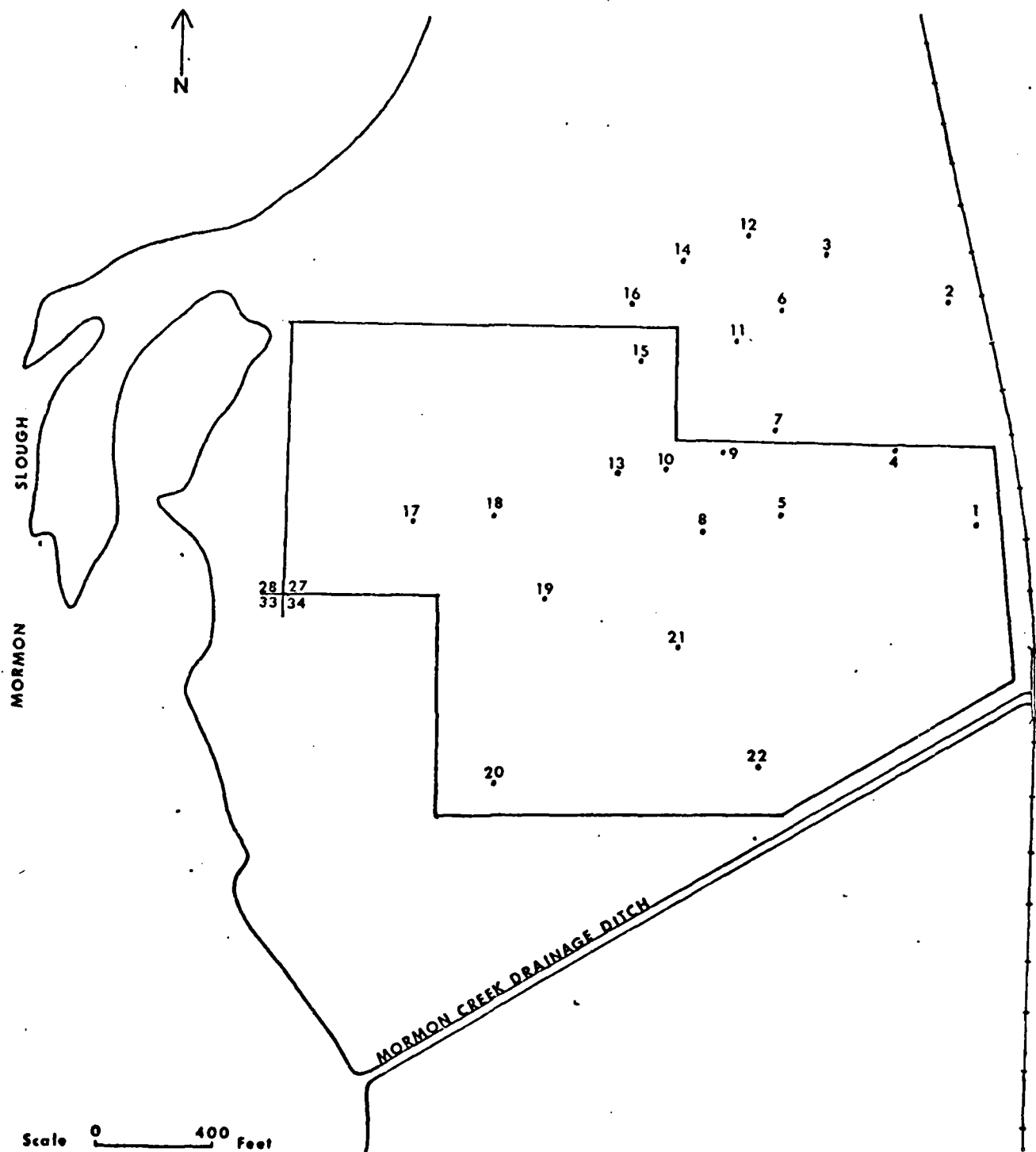


Figure 1. Location of Shovel Test Excavations and WKTY Survey Area

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